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HIGH REPRESENTATIVE  
OF THE UNION FOR  
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**JOINT STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT**

**Elements on an update of the EU Strategy on the Gulf of Guinea**

## JOINT STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

### Elements on an update of the EU strategy on the Gulf of Guinea

#### INTRODUCTION

**In line with the priorities and principles identified in its global strategy (2016)**<sup>1</sup>, the EU aims to build a stronger Europe in a more contested world, where internal and external security are ever more intertwined. Guided by clear principles, including the promotion of a rules-based order, the EU is a global stakeholder that engages with non-EU countries, regional bodies and international organisations to foster human security through an integrated approach, address the root causes of conflict and poverty, and promote human rights. In the pursuit of these goals, the EU will continue to reach out and work with core partners, like-minded countries and regional groupings.

The future of Africa is of strategic importance to the EU given its economic and demographic growth. The EU will invest in African peace and development as an investment in its own security and prosperity and it will enhance its efforts to stimulate sustainable and inclusive growth in Africa. Enhancing the security of its African partners is also a key priority for the EU. In light of the priorities set out in the Strategic Compass<sup>2</sup>, the EU will engage with the full range of its security and defence tools, in particular military and civilian missions and operations, peace and stabilisation programmes, assistance measures and financial support instruments, to further support its African partners in building regional security and stability.

The security of the maritime domain being of particular importance, the EU will maximise the integrated approach in the area of maritime security and promote good governance at sea. In line with its **maritime security strategy and action plan**<sup>3</sup>, the EU has been delivering tailored responses to improve maritime security and enhance the rules-based order, with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) at its core, in all key maritime regions across the globe. The waters surrounding the African continent, including the Gulf of Guinea, which has been declared a Maritime Area of Interest by the EU, will continue to receive particular attention through an integrated and internationally coordinated approach. The implementation of the Coordinated Maritime Presences (CMP) in the Gulf of Guinea reflects the EU's contribution to supporting the existing maritime security 'Yaoundé Architecture' in close cooperation with coastal states; its relevance has been recognised in the UN Security Council Resolution 3624/2022 on piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea, adopted on 31 May 2022.

This updated version of the EU strategy on the Gulf of Guinea<sup>4</sup> reflects the developing threat landscape that has evolved over the last 8 years in the region, as outlined in the context of the 2022 Strategic Compass. While piracy has long been understood as a threat to most coastal

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eugs\\_review\\_web\\_0.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eugs_review_web_0.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/strategic-compass-security-and-defence-1\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/strategic-compass-security-and-defence-1_en)

<sup>3</sup> [https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/ocean/blue-economy/other-sectors/maritime-security-strategy\\_en](https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/ocean/blue-economy/other-sectors/maritime-security-strategy_en)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/28734/141582.pdf>

states, today the concept of maritime security is broader, acknowledging that (the lack of) maritime security has an impact on the development of the blue economy and other economic activities in the region, and recognising the links to problems stemming from threats like illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, and connections with organised crime. New initiatives by the European Union and its Member States will continue to address the evolving maritime security threats in the region.

The Gulf of Guinea covers the 6 000 kilometres coastline stretching from Senegal to Angola, including the islands of Cabo Verde and Sao Tome and Principe, covered by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). The countries bordering the Gulf of Guinea face significant challenges related to poor ocean governance with a real risk to human and socio-economic development of the region as well as on trade and the environment.

### **Threats to the maritime domain**

Threats to the maritime domain take various forms. They are often interlinked across borders and can collectively lead to contagious criminal activity and linkages with transnational organised crime in Central Africa and the Sahel. This puts the stability of these states at risk and reduces their chances of sustainable economic development and of reducing poverty, to which the EU is committed. The main threats notably include:

- a) piracy and armed robbery at sea, including kidnap for ransom, oil bunkering and petro-piracy;
- b) trafficking of narcotics, arms, counterfeit goods, and human beings;
- c) illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing;
- d) criminal or unlawful acts in ports;
- e) degradation of marine domains and biodiversity loss, especially caused by environmental pollution.

### **Shared African and European interests**

The EU's overriding objective is to continue helping the states of the region to achieve peace, security and prosperity through the development of their economies and their institutions, and the preservation of their natural capital.

The key bases of the strategy are to enable and respect African ownership and maximise synergies and complementarity of programmes funded by the EU and its Member States while setting out an integrated approach to regional development and security.

Given the significant shared interests, the EU is committed to building on the achievements made since the signing of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct in 2013 and the subsequent establishment of the Yaoundé Architecture for Maritime Security and Safety. The EU also remains committed to providing appropriate support to regional organisations (ECOWAS, ECCAS, GGC) as well as to individual states to help them design effective and sustainable measures and strategies to address the challenges and implement them in a coordinated manner, in accordance with the Yaoundé Code of Conduct.

The EU has also interest in ensuring security of EU companies' assets and resources and promoting fair legal framework for investments. Aligned with international commitments, the EU will contribute to the protection of coastal areas from pollution and prevent biodiversity loss.

## Response

The threats outlined above can be mitigated by helping states to strengthen their maritime capabilities, as well as the rule of law and effective governance across the region. This would involve, for example, improving maritime administration and law enforcement through multiagency cooperation by the police, the armed forces, the coastguard, customs, and environmental and immigration services.

It is crucial to address the connection between land-based crime and maritime threats from the outset, as most of the threats to the maritime domain have their root causes on land. For instance, piracy in the high seas is often the end result of a long process that begins on land (e.g. organised crime), and including coastal community development in cooperation programmes is key for the security-development nexus.

As maritime boundaries are still not fully delineated and are permeable in nature, thus inherently hard to police, strengthening cooperation between the coastal states and regional coordination mechanisms is paramount. The EU will also support countries in the region in delivering on their international obligations as flag, port and coastal states.

It is therefore proposed that the EU and its Member States, working in coordination among themselves as well as with their local, regional and international partners, commit to an integrated approach focusing on four specific objectives:

1. Building a common understanding of the threats to the maritime domain and transversal challenges in the Gulf of Guinea and the need for the countries in the region and the international community to address them.
2. Supporting national governments and regional institutions in their endeavours to put in place the necessary institutions and capabilities to ensure security, good governance and the rule of law, in a way that promotes local ownership.
3. Supporting the development of prosperous and sustainable economies in the region, including landlocked neighbouring countries whose economies largely depend on coastal states for sea access, enabling them to provide basic services, entrepreneurship and employment opportunities and to reduce poverty among their population.
4. Strengthening cooperation and coordination structures between the EU and its Member States, the Yaoundé Architecture, the regional organisations and the countries of the region to ensure effective action across borders at sea and on land.

## THE NATURE AND EVOLUTION OF THE THREATS TO THE MARITIME DOMAIN

Over the last decade, West and Central African states have experienced a mix of dynamic economic growth together with a strengthening of governance in some countries and a weakening of it in others. However, progress could be threatened by growing instability and criminal activity in the Gulf of Guinea; and instability or economic disruption in this region will have a direct impact on the EU itself.

**Piracy, armed robbery at sea (ARAS) including kidnap for ransom.** Over the last decade, the Gulf of Guinea has become the global epicentre for piracy, with the largest number of attacks occurring off the coasts of Nigeria. According to International Maritime Bureau figures, between 2017 and 2021, 321 piracy and ARAS attacks took place in the Gulf of

Guinea, 157 of which were in Nigerian waters<sup>5</sup>. Over the last couple of years, there has been a shift towards kidnap for ransom, with 192 people kidnapped in the waters between Benin and Congo in 2020 and 2021. According to UNODC, most of perpetrators come from the Niger Delta. The trend decreased in 2021, also due to regional and international initiatives such as the EU CMPs. Nevertheless, the increase of oil bunkering activities in the Niger Delta possible explain a shift of criminality to on-land activities.

**Illegal ‘bunkering’, theft and petro-piracy of oil** deprive governments from revenues, increase commercial security costs, contribute to environmental pollution and discourage further investment. It is estimated that in Nigeria, the oil revenue lost equalled USD 3.5 billion in 2021 alone, or around 10% of the country’s foreign reserves<sup>6</sup>. The security of the petroleum and petrochemical industry is important not just in Nigeria (at the epicentre up to now), but increasingly further afield, off the coast of Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Cameroon, the Republic of Congo, Gabon, Chad, Liberia and Angola.

**Organised crime** in the form of trafficking of drugs, human beings, arms and counterfeit medicines, the illegal dumping of waste, and cybercrime and related money laundering, often takes place in the interface between the porous land and sea borders in the Gulf of Guinea. Trafficking routes often overlap with areas of instability and crisis, and with terrorism in the Sahel and northern Nigeria. Due to weak monitoring, high levels of institutional corruption, and convenient geographical location, the Gulf of Guinea has become one of the key routes for the movement of cocaine from South America to Europe, both in the coastline stretching between Senegal and Guinea-Conakry, and further south, with Cote d’Ivoire playing a prominent role since 2019. There is a risk that terrorist groups in the Sahel will take advantage of the situation as also indicated by the increased terrorist threat towards the South. Other illegal trafficking involves cocoa, wildlife, timber, cashew nuts, ivory, gold and diamonds.

**IUU fishing:** productive and sustainable fisheries are critical to food security in the region as fish and seafood makes up 26.2% of animal protein consumption in Central Africa and 34.1% in West Africa. It is also a crucial source of employment and household income, accounting for up to a quarter of jobs in West Africa linked to the fisheries sector. IUU fishing in the Gulf of Guinea costs coastal states around USD 1.6 billion a year. It poses a serious environmental threat to fish stocks and could potentially lead to the overall collapse of the fishing industry<sup>7</sup>. In 2018, total estimated catches in the Gulf of Guinea coastline are believed to have been up to 57% higher than reported<sup>8</sup>. IUU fishing not only threatens local trade, markets and jobs but also has wider ramifications for Europe and beyond through increased risk of imports of fisheries products stemming from IUU fishing into the EU and other international markets.

**Marine and environmental pollution** in the Gulf of Guinea coastal zone has caused heavy damages in the lagoon and mangrove systems, resulting in decreased fish reproduction levels and erosion. Around urban centres, land-based activities and unsustainable waste management affecting the marine environment are sources of waterborne diseases. Accidental oil spills, ballast discharges and criminal spills also exacerbate the damage to coastal environments, causing distress to fishing and agricultural livelihoods. Illegal refineries in the region, and in

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<sup>5</sup> <https://maritimecyprus.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/2021-Annual-IMB-Piracy-Report.pdf> and [https://www.icc-ccs.org/reports/2020\\_Annual\\_Piracy\\_Report.pdf](https://www.icc-ccs.org/reports/2020_Annual_Piracy_Report.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Bradstock F. Nigeria is losing major investment as oil theft runs rampant, 8 January 2022, available at: <https://oilprice.com/Energy/Crude-Oil/Nigeria-Is-Losing-Major-Investors-As-Oil-Theft-Runs-Rampant.html>

<sup>7</sup> U. R. Sumaila et al., ‘Illicit Trade in Marine Fish Catch and Its Effects on Ecosystems and People Worldwide,’ Science Advances Volume 6, Issue 9 (2020): 1-7. DOI: 10.1126/sciadv.aaz3801.

<sup>8</sup> University of British Columbia- Sea Around Us, *Catches by Reporting status in the waters of Guinea Current*, Accessed 11 June 2021, <http://www.seaaroundus.org/data/#/lme/28?chart=catch-chart&dimension=reporting-status&measure=tonnage&limit=10>

particular in the Niger Delta, are a major source of air, land and water pollution, while the dangerous activity also puts the health of perpetrators and communities at serious risk.

### **WHAT HAS BEEN DONE**

Responses to these threats in recent years have included a range of international, regional and national initiatives such as:

**UN Security Council resolution 3624/2022** on Piracy and Armed Robbery in the Gulf of Guinea adopted on 31 May 2022 sets out the need to adopt ‘a comprehensive approach led by the countries of the region to counter the threat of piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea and their underlying causes’. It also underlined the need to build on ‘existing national, regional and extra-regional initiatives to enhance maritime safety and security in the Gulf of Guinea’. The resolution focuses on promoting peace and stability in the Gulf of Guinea region in general and, more specifically, on encouraging international partners to enhance the counter-piracy capabilities of regional states and organisations in order to enable them to prevent and counter piracy and armed robbery effectively.

**ECOWAS and ECCAS** adopted policies and launched specific actions, mainly in response to increasing international pressure as well as international support. ECOWAS developed and launched the ECOWAS integrated maritime strategy (EIMS), which provides a comprehensive reference for actions at national and regional levels. ECCAS has an integrated strategy for maritime security in place since 2008. **The Interregional Coordination Centre (ICC)** was created to coordinate, steer and monitor the implementation of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct signed by ECOWAS, ECCAS and GGC during the Summit of Gulf of Guinea Heads of State held in Yaoundé on 24-25 June 2013. It has overall strategic authority and competence to direct resources and means from one region to another as necessary to address maritime crime. Underneath the regional CRESMAC and CRESMAO levels, the maritime security architecture in the Gulf of Guinea is made up of five Zones (A; D; E; F; G) covering the ECOWAS and ECCAS maritime space, each coordinated by a Multi-National Centre of Coordination (CMC). **Individual countries** in the Gulf of Guinea have begun to increase resources and develop joint strategies to address organised crime both offshore and on land.

The **African Union (AU)** adopted an African integrated maritime security strategy (the ‘2050 AIM strategy’) in January 2014. The **AU’s blue economy strategy** of 2019 constitutes the maritime component, contributing to achieving the goals of the African Union Agenda 2063. In 2020, the AU adopted an implementation plan for the blue economy strategy. Sustainable blue economy is also mentioned in the AU Green Recovery Action Plan 2021-2027.

The **International Maritime Organisation (IMO)** has created a forum for states and stakeholders to discuss and cooperate on countering piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea. The organisation has provided expertise and assistance to regional organisations and Gulf of Guinea countries, notably thanks to its West and Central Africa Maritime Security Trust Fund. The shipping industry shared at the level of the IMO its ‘Best Management Practices (BMP) West Africa (WA)’ guidelines to help companies and seafarers assess and mitigate threats associated with voyages through the Gulf of Guinea. In December 2021, the IMO adopted an Assembly resolution calling for further action to counter piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea, and notably recognising the role of the EU’s coordinated maritime presences (CMP) pilot case<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/01/25/gulf-of-guinea-council-conclusions-launching-the-pilot-case-for-the-coordinated-maritime-presences-concept/>

The EU continues to support the socio-economic development of the Gulf of Guinea countries, through their bilateral and regional cooperation. The EU's support is consistent with the national development policies of the beneficiary countries and integrates the regional dimension. The support also covers state building and reinforcement, economic growth and poverty reduction in all its aspects. **EU Member States** have increased their support by implementing or reinforcing bilateral and regional programmes. Their support is already substantial, notably for building the capacity of key institutions and services.

**The EU** cooperates with several countries in the Gulf of Guinea through sustainable fishery partnership agreements (SFPAs). Furthermore, under the IUU Regulation, the European Commission cooperates with West African countries through formal and or informal dialogues to strengthen their capacities to counter IUU fishing. This includes technical support in conducting necessary reforms to comply with international obligations, notably UNCLOS and related instruments. The **CMP** tool aims to increase the EU's capacity as a reliable partner and maritime security provider, offering greater European operational engagement, ensuring a continued EU maritime presence and outreach in maritime areas of interest (MAI) as established by the Council, and promoting international cooperation and partnership at sea. The CMP in the Gulf of Guinea, established in 2021, will further enhance the EU's coordination capacities in strategic maritime environments.

The EU-funded project '**Gulf of Guinea Interregional Network**' (**GoGIN**) aims to contribute to maritime safety and security in the region of the Gulf of Guinea to boost the blue economy and economic development of these countries. The key mechanism for achieving this is the YARIS platform, an information-sharing tool that connects the centres of the Yaoundé Architecture which are spread over multiple zones, as well as the various national agencies, to address illicit activities at sea and provide assistance to vessels and people.

The two EU regional programmes **SWAIMS** and **PASSMAR** both aim to incentivise the proper implementation of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct, supporting ECOWAS and ECCAS respectively. **PESCAO** enhances the contribution of fisheries resources to sustainable development, food security and poverty alleviation in West Africa. PESCAO will be followed in 2023 by the **West African regional programme on oceans**<sup>10</sup> (with a corresponding programme in Central Africa – '**Central Africa regional programme on oceans**'), aimed at improving port security and alleviating poverty in West Africa. A number of other programmes are addressing different types of trafficking which have connection to the sea, most notably SEACOP focussing on drug-trafficking or OCWAR-T addressing all types of trafficking in West Africa. The **Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre – Narcotics (MAOC-N)**, an operational platform set up by 6 EU Member States (France, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Netherlands, Portugal) as well as the United Kingdom, and funded by the European Union, is also active to improve the cooperation in the fight against illicit drug trafficking by air and sea in particular across the Atlantic Ocean towards Europe and the West African Seaboard.

In addition, the EU is considering an **assistance measure (AM) under the European Peace Facility** to support military actors of some coastal states involved in maritime security operations in the Gulf of Guinea. The aim of the measure is to strengthen a selected number of coastal navies and the role and capacities of YA members in order to support their maritime security objectives. These groups, along with regional organisations and coastal states will work in close cooperation with the Coordinated Maritime Presence (CMP), and to support the operationalisation of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct and the Yaoundé

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<sup>10</sup> The first objective of the West Africa programme on oceans is to build on PESCAO's achievements in actively mitigating and reducing IUU practices in West Africa.



Architecture. In line with the EU's integrated approach, the specific objectives are to enhance: (a) maritime domain awareness (MDA); and (b) the military capabilities of the beneficiary coastal states.

**Other international partners** such as the UN, INTERPOL, the United States (US), the United Kingdom, South Korea, Japan, Brazil, India and Turkey have set up bilateral programmes for the development of legal frameworks, policy formulation, coordination and institutional capacity building.

**The G7++ Friends of the Gulf of Guinea Group (G7++FOGG)**, of which the EU is a member, was set up in 2013 to support coastal states and regional organisations in building maritime capacity in the Gulf of Guinea. It focuses on the importance of African ownership; the link between economic development, environmental protection and security; coordination and the exchange of information; and the need for a comprehensive response, which should include governance and justice.

**The Gulf of Guinea Maritime Collaboration Forum and Shared Awareness and De-confliction (GoG-MCF/SHADE)**, hosted by the Yaoundé Architecture Interregional Coordination Centre (YAICC), the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) and the Nigerian Navy, focuses on counter-piracy and armed robbery by bringing together all regional, international and industry partners to advance and coordinate near term maritime activities. The aim is for these partners to work towards a set of common operational objectives through deconfliction in order to protect seafarers and ships operating off the coast of West and Central Africa.

## THE WAY FORWARD

Since the adoption of the first version of the strategy in 2014, the EU's approach has been based on three principles.

1. Partnership with the countries of the Gulf of Guinea and close coordination with their regional organisations and other international organisations active in the region (ECOWAS, ECCAS, GGC), the UN offices for Central and West Africa and on drugs and crime, (UNOCA, UNOWA and UNODC), and international organisations including the AU, UN agencies such as the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), as well as INTERPOL, the World Customs Organisation (WCO) and others.
2. A comprehensive approach to the problems, ensuring that security, development and governance issues are integrated into a single strategic framework.
3. Applying the lessons learnt from the EU's strategies in other regions of Africa, especially in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel.

The **Strategic Compass (2022)** sets out objectives that are part of an integrated approach to external threats that affect the EU's internal security and that are fully consistent with and complementary to existing policies. In line with the actions proposed in the Strategic Compass, the EU will further invest in its global naval presence in order to ensure unfettered access to the high seas, security of sea-lanes of communication and respect for the rules-based order at sea. In line with its updated maritime security strategy and action plan, the EU will further assert its interests in the maritime domain and continue to take a comprehensive approach to addressing maritime security challenges and threats. It will continue to boost its own maritime security, including by enhancing EU maritime awareness mechanisms such as the common information sharing environment (CISE), improving the interoperability of naval forces through live exercises and organising European port calls. It will also continue to support its regional partners on maritime security, in particular through assistance and

capacity building. Finally, it will seek to cooperate with other partners, in particular with the competent organisations responsible for the implementation of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct.

Bearing that in mind, and to avoid any overlap with Member States' initiatives already under way in the region, the EU approach will focus on the following four objectives:

**Objective 1** – *Building a common understanding of the threats to the maritime domain and transversal challenges in the Gulf of Guinea and the need for the countries in the region and the international community to address them.*

Cooperation with key stakeholders in countries and regional organisations, including civil society and non-governmental organisations, United Nations agencies, regional fisheries management organisations and arrangements (RFMO/As) and the private sector, will make it possible to set out a comprehensive picture of the scale of the threats, identify opportunities and agree priorities. The links between maritime and land will be taken into close account, as well as the links between maritime security, ocean governance, blue economy, environment, law enforcement/governance, migration and human development.

#### Possible action

- Enhance maritime domain awareness (MDA) building on coordinated maritime presences (CMP) by improving data collection (many maritime incidents often still go unreported) and information sharing especially through the YARIS platform.
- Increase diplomatic exchanges between the EU and partner countries to obtain a common understanding of the challenges to the maritime domain in the region and promote ownership.
- Ensure an integrated/comprehensive approach to thematic (security, IUU fishing, trafficking of drugs, human beings and crude oil, environmental protection, smuggling of migrants, and counter-terrorism) and geographical policies/strategies.
- Maintain close links and organise consultations with the private sector, to ensure their perspectives are taken into account by governments; and with civil society to better understand the local context; and in parallel, also support dialogue with international partners active in the region to better coordinate efforts and avoid duplication.

**Objective 2** – *Supporting national governments and regional institutions in their endeavours to put in place the necessary institutions and capabilities to ensure security, good governance and rule of law, in a way that promotes local ownership.*

Resilient national and regional institutions able to counter the threats on a sustainable basis are essential for an effective, multiagency fight against organised criminal networks. These institutions need to have the will to counter criminality, the mandate and resources to do so, as well as the technical capability, including in specialist areas.

The institutions include:

- regional institutions ECOWAS, ECCAS and GGC and mechanisms, in particular the Interregional Coordination Centre and the regional centres of the Yaoundé Architecture (as outlined in the MoU on Maritime Safety and Security in West and Central Africa) to which the EU is offering technical assistance and support;
- political institutions (for example parliaments, election management bodies, political parties) that can provide other institutions with a mandate to intervene and an appropriate legal framework to do so;
- security institutions and public authorities (for example internal security forces, coastguards, port authorities, customs authorities and military – land, sea and air forces, all with associated intelligence gathering functions) that can conduct surveillance operations and, where necessary, intervene to protect trade routes, oil installations and disrupt illegal

activities such as drug, human trafficking crude oil and smuggling of migrants. Rules may need to be developed and political accountability put in place to ensure clear responsibilities for serious crimes on land or sea, while respecting the legal framework established by UNCLOS;

- rule of law institutions (for example police, courts and prisons, and others) that can: (a) enable suspects to be investigated, tried and suitably punished according to law and with respect for human rights instruments and standards; (b) build capabilities through training of fisheries enforcement authorities competent for IUU matters, including judges, prosecutors, etc.; (c) facilitate access to justice and human rights protection (also within prisons); and (d) promote judiciary and home affairs reform;
- economic and environmental management institutions;
- oversight institutions and civil society (for example auditor general, ombudsman, anti-corruption institutions, media, NGOs, think tanks, community groups) that can encourage good governance and rule of law to counter the enabling space for organised criminal networks to operate in.

#### Possible action

- Improve the rule of law by strengthening national law enforcement agencies and the judiciary, with particular attention to the legal finish. This would include building prisons and boosting interagency and regional coordination in the fight against maritime-based crime, terrorism, transnational organised crime, and in addressing threats such as IUU fishing, which would involve security and legal cooperation, data sharing, and cross-border joint actions. Support the implementation of the 2050 Africa Integrated Maritime Strategy and improve the monitoring and reporting of maritime security breaches, including the collection of evidence for prosecution. Such support should take account of previous experience. The use of all EU instruments (including the CMP), should be explored as part of an integrated approach and in cooperation with UNODC and INTERPOL.
- Promote fisheries and environmental governance through the development and enforcement of coastal states' fisheries regulatory frameworks, including the management of fisheries on the basis of best available scientific advice and precautionary approach. Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements (SFPA)<sup>11</sup> with partner countries and the monitoring of activities of the EU fleet in the region<sup>12</sup>. The work together with international organisations, Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMO) - notably the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), and other key bodies in support of the upgrading of regional fisheries bodies, such as the Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic (CECAF). Work with the private sector to promote corporate responsibility and consultation with civil society and local communities as a way to ensure citizens' engagement and ownership.
- Support closer coordination and coherence between the EU and its Member States and the countries in the region, mostly in areas related to security, governance and the rule of law.

**Objective 3** – *Supporting the development of prosperous economies in the region, including landlocked neighbouring countries whose economies largely depend on coastal states for sea access, enabling them to provide basic services, entrepreneurship and employment opportunities and to reduce poverty among their population.*

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<sup>11</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/oceans-and-fisheries/fisheries/international-agreements/sustainable-fisheries-partnership-agreements-sfpas\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/oceans-and-fisheries/fisheries/international-agreements/sustainable-fisheries-partnership-agreements-sfpas_en)

<sup>12</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32017R2403>

Widespread poverty, poor governance and under-development can provide a breeding ground for criminal activities. Creating legitimate and sustainable jobs for young people, in particular in blue economy sectors could help tackle some of the underlying causes of insecurity in many Gulf of Guinea countries.

Key issues addressed in the European Consensus on Development include good governance, inclusive and sustainable growth, agriculture, food security, clean energy, and increasing resilience to the consequences of climate change and environmental degradation. In terms of nutrition, trade, economic development and employment, the importance for the region of improvements to the management of the fisheries sector, is clear. Gender equality and empowering women as development actors should also be given careful consideration.

#### Possible action

- Continue and extend the ongoing work to improve regulation, management and control of key industries and the private sector in Gulf of Guinea countries including fisheries and extractive industries.
- Support the development of a sustainable blue economy.
- Support the development of secure and modern infrastructures in the framework of the Global Gateway, including ports.
- Increase community participation in local economic development (taking gender balance into consideration), and support communities by extending access to energy and basic services.
- Engage with Gulf of Guinea countries, regional fisheries management organisations and arrangements, international organisations and other key stakeholders to improve regulation, management and control of fisheries and other extractive industries.
- Promote a stronger and sustained focus on job creation.
- Ensure participation of coastal communities and local CSOs in the programming phase of EU development cooperation.

**Objective 4** – *Strengthening cooperation and coordination structures between the EU and its Member States, the Yaoundé Architecture, the regional organisations and the countries of the region to ensure effective action across borders at sea and on land.*

The importance of information sharing and cooperation among a wide range of agencies and public and private actors calls for building strong mechanisms for their planning and coordination efforts, supported by the EU. Moreover, the EU needs to actively coordinate with its Member States, to increase the perception of the EU as a single entity with a common message.

#### Possible action

- Improve planning, coordination and communication among regional partners, and help regional organisations work more collaboratively in the follow-up to the Yaoundé Summit.
- Foster cooperation with the coastal states to tackle maritime-based crime, while enhancing coordination between Members States’ assets through the CMP.
- Increase the EU’s political presence in the region, not only through the EUDs but also by strengthening the role of the EU figurehead coordinating these activities to enhance all aspects of the Gulf of Guinea strategy, guarantee visibility and provide a common message in larger fora, e.g. G7++ FoGG and GoG-MCF/SHADE. This person will also be essential for bringing together the military component (currently coordinated through the CMP) and the main EU flagship projects in the Gulf of Guinea.
- EU political dialogues with GoG states, regional organisations and other regional bodies should regularly assess security at sea and on land, as well as the situation in terms of development, trends and needs.
- Support ECOWAS, ECCAS, GGC and the African Union in their efforts to coordinate internally, with their Member States, with each other and with external partners, including

where possible through the secondment of EU security experts/advisers from various professional fields.

- Seek opportunities to discuss maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea with EU Member States in various fora and instances, be they directly on security or on maritime security matters, as well as linked to other relevant discussions covering thematic or geographic areas.

## CONCLUSIONS

Although some promising steps have been taken at national, regional and international level, the scale, variety and shifting nature of criminal activities, as well as the complexity of the underlying problems, require further attention at all three levels. The actions to be taken in the region, as set out in the updated strategy, are consistent with and complementary to national poverty reduction policies and regional initiatives.

It is important, however, that the region, the EU and its Member States, and the international community continue to strengthen the various initiatives.

Concentrating on where the EU can have the greatest effect would be the wisest course of action. This would notably include building on the momentum of the coordinated maritime presences (CMP) and promoting the integrated approach. The EU will give greater weight to the links between maritime threats and land-based issues and address the ‘land-sea nexus’ using all the tools at its disposal. The non-binding nature of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct, obliges all interested parties to continuously advocate for stronger efforts, especially at political level. This should include the information-sharing philosophy of the Yaoundé Architecture, which is not yet embraced by all actors, thus undermining effective regional cooperation.

The Yaoundé Architecture, both at ICC and at centres (regional, zonal and national) level, represents the best option for an effective and sustainable ownership of their maritime security by coastal states in the medium to long term. However, the structure and governance model (including funding) of the Yaoundé Architecture and Code of Conduct clearly need to undergo a comprehensive review. Such a process will need to be driven by the region’s political leaders, with the EU providing technical support.

We know that a satisfactory level of maritime security is a prerequisite for the development of a thriving and sustainable blue economy. As such we will thoroughly address the challenges to the maritime domain in an integrated manner, working towards the development of an African maritime domain free from threats.